DR. STRANGE
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DOCTOR STRANGE
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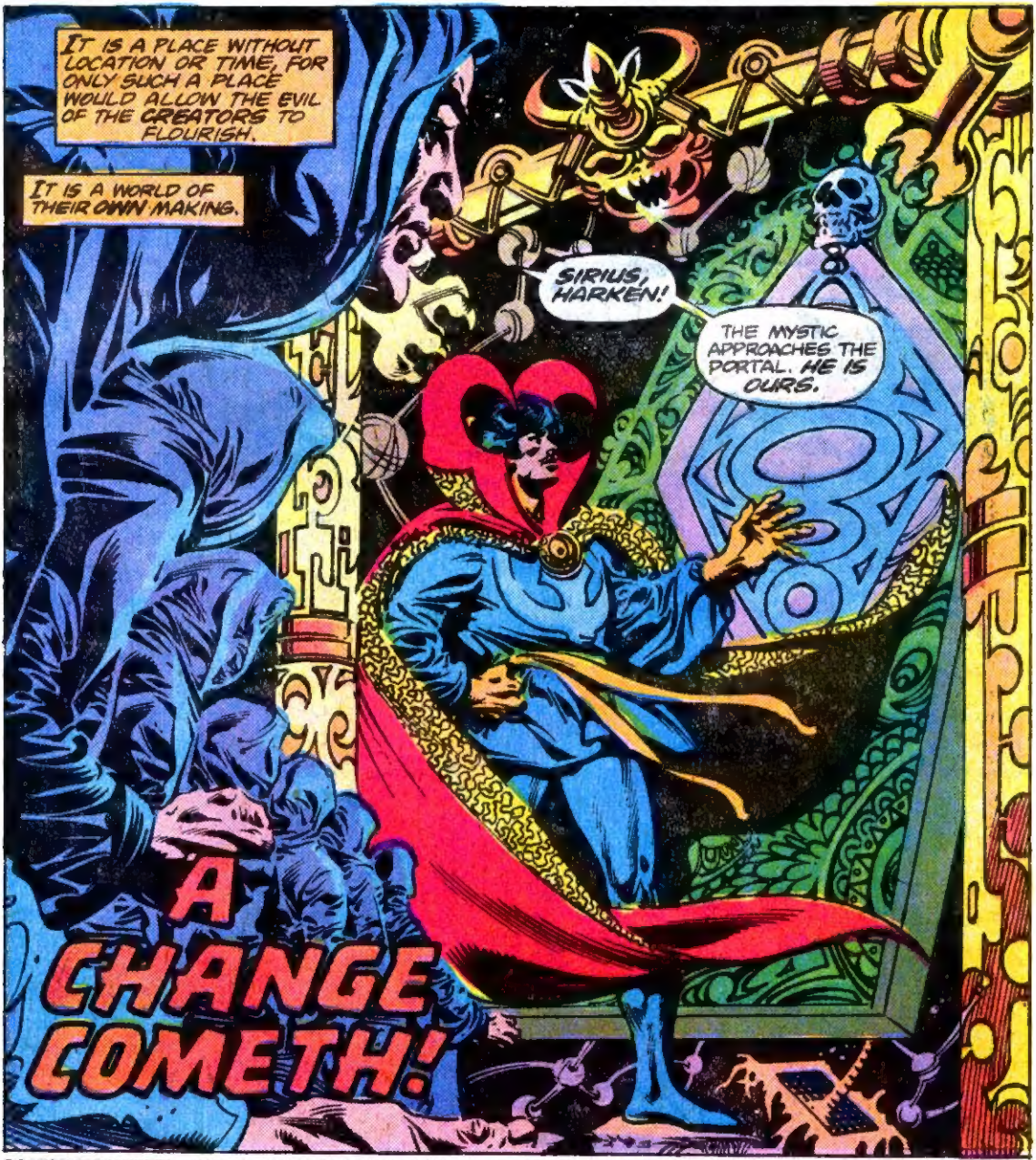
THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS TEAMS WITH THE MYSTERIOUS APALLA TO BATTLE-- THE CREATORS!
WHAT PRICE THE UNIVERSE?

Once he was a man like most *others*— a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like no other—a man who left us *behind*, as he strove to stand against the unseen subtle perils hovering *thick* and *black* around our fragile existence...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

AN ADVENTURE INTO WONDERMENT FROM: JIM STARLIN * AL MILGROM * RUDY NEBRES
ANNETTE KAWECKI * JANICE COHEN * ARCHIE GOODWIN


IT IS A PLACE WITHOUT LOCATION OR TIME, FOR ONLY SUCH A PLACE WOULD ALLOW THE EVIL OF THE CREATORS TO FLOURISH.
IT IS A WORLD OF THEIR OWN MAKING.
SIRIUS, HARKEN!
THE MYSTIC APPROACHES THE PORTAL. HE IS OURS.
A CHANGE COMETH!

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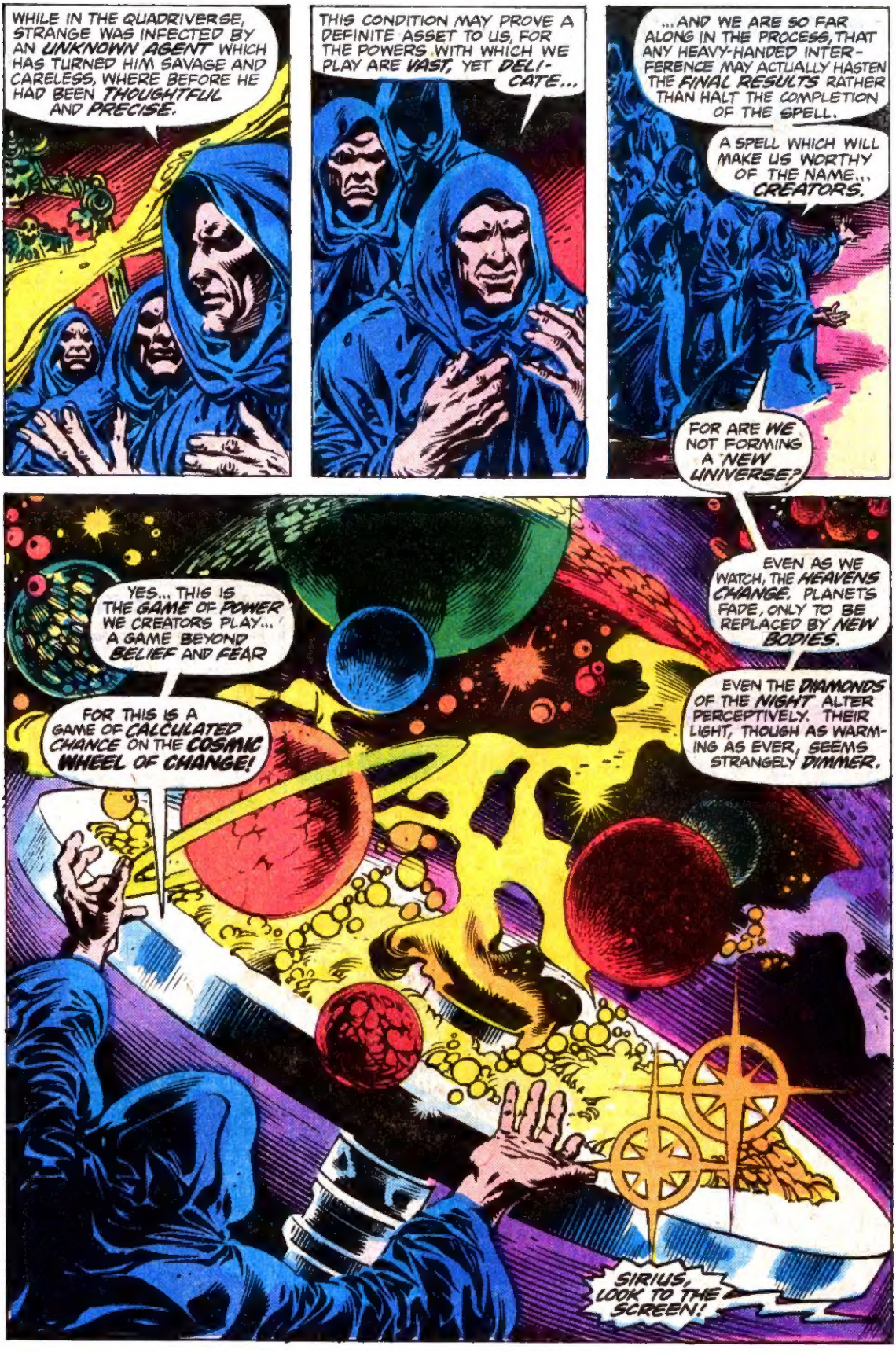
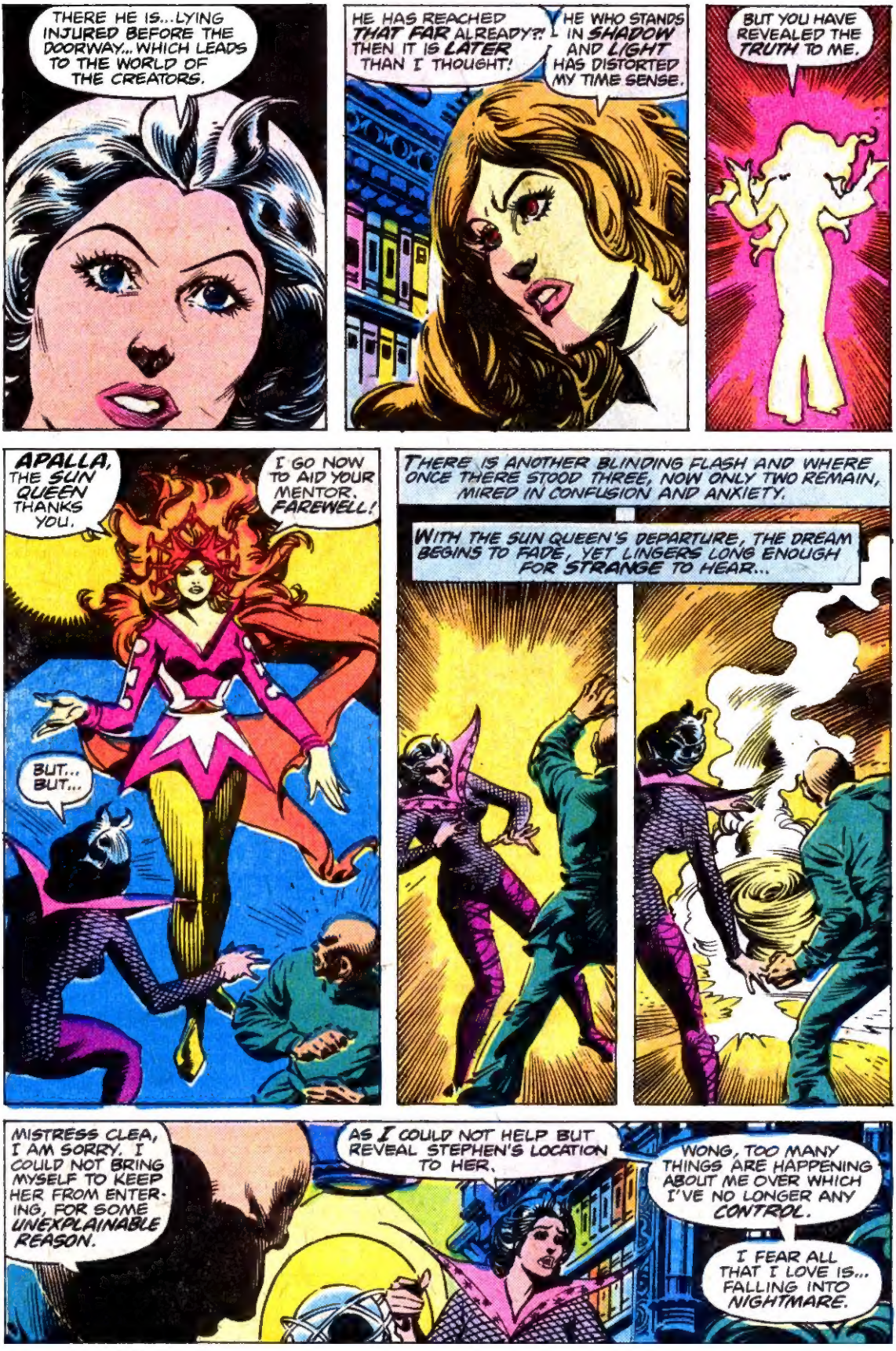
AT LAST DR. STRANGE WILL BE ELIMINATED AND THE GRAND ALTERATION WILL PROCEED WITHOUT MISHAP.
HOPEFULLY! OF ALL THE MASTERS OF MYSTICISM THROUGHOUT THAT SPHERE, ONLY STRANGE'S PERCEPTIONS ARE SUCH THAT HE MIGHT THWART OUR PLANS.
EVEN AS HE WAS ABLE TO OVERCOME OUR MOST POWERFUL AGENT, XANDER THE MERCILESS.
"YET EVEN FROM THE ASHES OF THAT DEFEAT WE GAINED THAT MOST PRECIOUS OF GIFTS... TIME.
"FOR BEFORE FALLING, XANDER WAS ABLE TO BEND STRANGE'S PUPIL, CLEA, TO HIS WILL AND SEND HER ON A MINDLESS RAMPAGE THE GOOD DOCTOR WAS FORCED TO END.
"BY THEN WE WERE ABLE TO DIVERT THE MAGE INTO A FURTHER TIME-CONSUMING MISSION TO THE QUADRIVERSE.
"THIS MANEUVER GAINED FOR US AN UNFORESEEN BONUS."

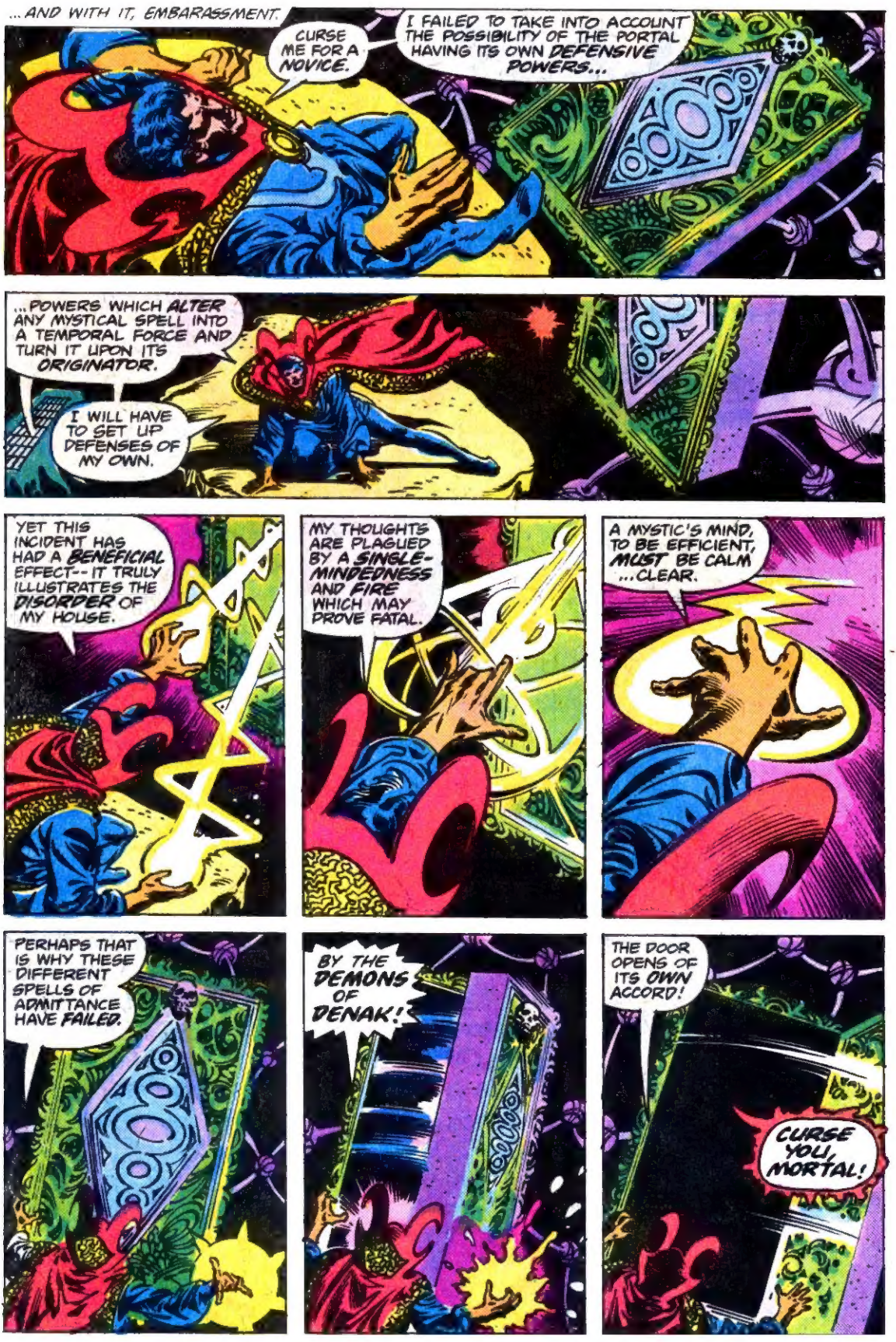

WHILE IN THE QUADRIVERSE, STRANGE WAS INFECTED BY AN UNKNOWN AGENT WHICH HAS TURNED HIM SAVAGE AND CARELESS, WHERE BEFORE HE HAD BEEN THOUGHTFUL AND PRECISE.
THIS CONDITION MAY PROVE A DEFINITE ASSET TO US, FOR THE POWERS WITH WHICH WE PLAY ARE VAST, YET DELI-CATE...
...AND WE ARE SO FAR ALONG IN THE PROCESS, THAT ANY HEAVY-HANDED INTER-FERENCE MAY ACTUALLY HASTEN THE FINAL RESULTS RATHER THAN HALT THE COMPLETION OF THE SPELL.
A SPELL WHICH WILL MAKE US WORTHY OF THE NAME... CREATORS.
FOR ARE WE NOT FORMING A NEW UNIVERSE?
EVEN AS WE WATCH, THE HEAVENS CHANGE. PLANETS FADE, ONLY TO BE REPLACED BY NEW BODIES.
EVEN THE DIAMONDS OF THE NIGHT ALTER PERCEPTIVELY. THEIR LIGHT, THOUGH AS WARM-ING AS EVER, SEEMS STRANGELY DIMMER.
YES... THIS IS THE GAME OF POWER WE CREATORS PLAY... A GAME BEYOND BELIEF AND FEAR
FOR THIS IS A GAME OF CALCULATED CHANCE ON THE COSMIC WHEEL OF CHANGE!
SIRIUS, LOOK TO THE SCREEN!

"WHAT IS IT, CYGNI? WHAT IS STRANGE DOING?"
"THAT'S JUST IT, SIRIUS. HE'S DOING NOTHING."
SINCE COMING TO THE QUADRI-VERSE I'VE FOUND MYSELF REACTING TO SITUATIONS IN A MANNER WHICH AT BEST CAN BE DESCRIBED AS COLD-BLOODED.
TWICE NOW I'VE KILLED WITHOUT REMORSE. SUCH ACTS ARE NOT IN MY NATURE, YET I HAVE COMMITTED THEM...
SINCE MAGIC IS BASED LARGELY ON THE SMOOTH FLOW BETWEEN THE SOUL AND MIND, MY CONFUSED AND CONTRA-DICTORY STATE MAY HAMPER MY ABILITY TO COPE WITH THE CREATORS.
YET, DO I DARE TARRY LONG ENOUGH TO RESOLVE THE PROBLEM?
THE ANSWER TO THAT IS ...NO!
SO AT LAST I REACH MY GOAL. BEHIND THIS DEMONIC PORTAL AWAIT MY ADVER-SARIES, THE CREATORS.
I SENSE IMMEDIATE DANGER ON A GRAND SCALE, SO...
...BY THE ETERNAL VISHANTI! THE DOOR IS RESISTING MY SPELL OF ADMITTANCE?!
THEN I MUST CALL UPON MORE...EH?
ARRGH!
PAIN, THEN DARKNESS, ENGULFS THE MYSTIC, BUT WITHIN THE DARK-NESS LURK VISIONS...
...VISIONS WHICH DANCE BEFORE HIS UNSEEING EYES. IMAGES OF ACTIONS TAKING PLACE AT THIS VERY MOMENT BACK IN GREENWICH VILLAGE.
YET...AM I READY FOR THIS CONFRON-TATION?

AS DO MANY DREAMS, THIS ONE FOCUSES ON A GIRL.
HE HAS NOT YET RETURNED AND MY TIME GROWS SHORT.
I MUST ACT QUICKLY OR MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE DOOMED. BY THE GRAND NEBULAR, LET THERE BE A THOUSAND CURSES UPON THIS ENTIRE AFFAIR.
ONE CURSE FOR THE FACT THAT MY VERY NATURE DOES NOT PERMIT ME TO INTERFERE WITH THE WORKINGS OF THE WHEEL.
ANOTHER FOR THIS DR. STRANGE, FOR BEING TOO INSIGNIFICANT TO AROUSE THE WHEEL'S MIGHT, YET POWERFUL ENOUGH TO AFFECT THE WHEEL'S DESTINATION.
AND STILL ANOTHER CURSE ON CLEA FOR NOT BEING SUFFICIENTLY ENDOWED MYSTICALLY FOR THE TASK AHEAD. SHE WAS MY FIRST CHOICE IN THIS MATTER.
CLEA... OF COURSE...
THERE ARE POWERS AT WORK HERE WHICH HINDER ME FROM ASCERTAINING DR. STRANGE'S WHEREABOUTS MENTALLY.
BUT CLEA MAY NOT BE SO HAMPERED. PERHAPS SHE KNOWS WHERE HER MENTOR IS.
QUICKLY! WHERE CAN YOUR MISTRESS BE FOUND?
IN THE STUDY... MADAM...
WHO?! WHO ARE YOU? HOW DID YOU GET IN HERE?
I TOLD WONG I WAS NOT TO BE DISTURBED FOR ANY REASON.
THAT IS OF NO IMPORTANCE. ONLY MY FINDING STEPHEN STRANGE IMMEDIATELY MATTERS.
WHERE?
LOOK... IN THE ORB... YOU CAN SEE HIM...


THERE HE IS...LYING INJURED BEFORE THE DOORWAY... WHICH LEADS TO THE WORLD OF THE CREATORS.
HE HAS REACHED THAT FAR ALREADY?! THEN IT IS LATER THAN I THOUGHT!
HE WHO STANDS IN SHADOW AND LIGHT HAS DISTORTED MY TIME SENSE.
BUT YOU HAVE REVEALED THE TRUTH TO ME.
APALLA, THE SUN QUEEN THANKS YOU.
I GO NOW TO AID YOUR MENTOR. FAREWELL!
BUT... BUT...
THERE IS ANOTHER BLINDING FLASH AND WHERE ONCE THERE STOOD THREE, NOW ONLY TWO REMAIN, MIRED IN CONFUSION AND ANXIETY.
WITH THE SUN QUEEN'S DEPARTURE, THE DREAM BEGINS TO FADE, YET LINGERS LONG ENOUGH FOR STRANGE TO HEAR...
MISTRESS CLEA, I AM SORRY. I COULD NOT BRING MYSELF TO KEEP HER FROM ENTERING, FOR SOME UNEXPLAINABLE REASON.
AS I COULD NOT HELP BUT REVEAL STEPHEN'S LOCATION TO HER.
WONG, TOO MANY THINGS ARE HAPPENING ABOUT ME OVER WHICH I'VE NO LONGER ANY CONTROL.
I FEAR ALL THAT I LOVE IS... FALLING INTO NIGHTMARE.

SECOND DREAM...
ALL GOES AS PLANNED!
THE WHEEL TURNS SMOOTHLY, THE CHANGE COMES AND DR. STRANGE'S REACTIONARY MEDDLING IS THWARTED.
IT'S A PITY HE MUST BE OUR ENEMY...HE WOULD HAVE PROVEN A VALUABLE ADDITION TO OUR RANKS.
BUT IT WAS NOT IN HIM TO ENVISION THE NEW HORIZONS WE ARE CREATING.
"STARS IN THE DARKNESS..."
WHY COULD HE NOT UNDERSTAND THAT ALL THINGS PASS ...ARE CHANGED BY TIME AND MAN...
"...WHICH FADE INTO OBLIVION.
EVEN THE MIGHTIEST OF GODS...THE STARS, MUST ONE DAY FALL...
"...TO BE REPLACED BY NEW GEMS OF THE NIGHT.
SO WHO BETTER TO FILL THE VOID LEFT BY DEPARTED DIETIES THAN WE CREATORS?
WE SHALL BECOME THE NEW STARS OF THE UNIVERSE...!
"...WHICH GIVE OFF A STRANGELY OBSCENE GLOW...


...AND WITH IT, EMBARASSMENT.
CURSE ME FOR A NOVICE.
I FAILED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE PORTAL HAVING ITS OWN DEFENSIVE POWERS...
...POWERS WHICH ALTER ANY MYSTICAL SPELL INTO A TEMPORAL FORCE AND TURN IT UPON ITS ORIGINATOR.
I WILL HAVE TO SET UP DEFENSES OF MY OWN.
YET THIS INCIDENT HAS HAD A BENEFICIAL EFFECT-- IT TRULY ILLUSTRATES THE DISORDER OF MY HOUSE.
MY THOUGHTS ARE PLAGUED BY A SINGLE-MINDEDNESS AND FIRE WHICH MAY PROVE FATAL.
A MYSTIC'S MIND, TO BE EFFICIENT, MUST BE CALM ...CLEAR.
PERHAPS THAT IS WHY THESE DIFFERENT SPELLS OF ADMITTANCE HAVE FAILED.
BY THE DEMONS OF DENAK!
THE DOOR OPENS OF ITS OWN ACCORD!
CURSE YOU, MORTAL!

I HAD HOPED YOU WOULD TIRE OF YOUR FUTILE ATTEMPTS AT ENTERING CREATION II, BUT IT WAS NOT TO BE SO... AND YOUR NOISESOME ENCHANTMENTS DISTURB MY SLUMBER.
SO PREPARE TO DIE BY THE POWER OF VISIMAJORIS, THE DIVIDER OF SOULS.
THERE IS A BURST OF LIGHT WHICH BLINDS, BURNS, AND CAUSES THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS TO FEEL SOMETHING DEEP WITHIN HIMSELF SPLIT IN TWO, IN FOUR, EIGHT, SIXTEEN...
...AND SO ON UNTIL 1024 DR. STEPHEN STRANGES, GLASSY EYED AND CONFUSED, STAND BEFORE THE CREATORS' GUARD AND PORTAL...

THE DR. STRANGE WHICH IS LIFE FALLS TO THE GROUND, WEAK, STRIPPED OF ALL QUALITIES AND STRENGTHS.
IN THE NAME OF THE ETERNAL VISHANTI, WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO ME?
YOU HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO THE SOUL DIVIDER!
I HAVE THE POWER TO SEPARATE YOU FROM YOUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES--IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR DEFENSES.
THIS LEAVES THE TRUE YOU HELPLESS BEFORE ME..
..ALLOWING ME TO SPLIT YOUR LIFE ESSENCE INTO SECTIONS TOO WEAK TO EXIST
SO PRAY QUICKLY TO WHATEVER GODS YOU MAY WORSHIP, INTRUDER, FOR YOU ARE ABOUT TO...
...DIE!

BY THE MYSTIC MAZE OF MADNESS! YOU?!
YOU'RE THE GIRL FROM MY DREAM...DREAMS...
DREAMS I ARRANGED.
WHY?
TO SHOW YOU THE EXACT NATURE OF THE INFAMY BEING PERPETRATED AGAINST THAT WHICH YOU CALL THE HEAVENS.
AGAIN WHY? THE CREATORS ARE OBVIOUSLY MEN OF POWER, WHO DREAM OF BECOMING MEN OF ULTIMATE POWER.
BECOMING AN INERT CELESTIAL BODY SEEMS A RATHER SELF-DEFEATING ACT.
NOT AT ALL.
THINK, STEPHEN STRANGE. WHERE DOES ALL POWER TRULY ORIGINATE?
IN THE LONG RUN, FROM THE SUN, OF COURSE.
HERE TOO, IS THE INDIRECT BIRTHPLACE OF ALL MYSTICAL MIGHT.
CONTROL OF THE SOURCE MEANS TOTAL CONTROL.
TO BE A STAR MEANS THE VERY LAWS OF NATURE ARE YOURS TO AMEND AS YOU WISH.
YOU SEE STARS ARE NOT INERT CELESTIAL BODIES. THEY ARE HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, AWARE, AND POWERFUL.

IMAGINE, IF YOU WILL, SUCH POWER IN THE HANDS OF THE CREATORS...
MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS ARE PLEDGED TO STOP THESE FIENDS FROM GAINING THEIR UNHOLY ENDS.
ONCE AGAIN YOU MENTION YOUR MYSTERIOUS RELATIONS.
JUST WHO ARE THEY--AND WHO EXACTLY ARE YOU?
WHAT STAKE HAVE YOU IN THIS STRANGE DRAMA?
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD HAVE GUESSED OR SENSED WHY BEFORE THIS.
IT APPEARS MY DISGUISE IS FAR MORE EFFICIENT THAN I HAD SUPPOSED. SO I SHALL REMOVE IT.
THEN YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHY YOUR BATTLE IS ALSO OURS. YOU SEE...
...WE DON'T LIKE COMPETITION.

I REALIZE THAT MY VERY EXISTENCE, MY DISGUISE, MY POWERS, NEARLY EVERYTHING ABOUT ME IS BEYOND YOUR RECKONING SO...
...SIMPLY ACCEPT ON PURE FAITH THE FACT THAT YOU ARE BEING AIDED BY THAT WHICH YOU CALL AN INERT CELESTIAL BODY--A STAR.
BUT ALL THIS IS OF NO IMPORT FOR NOW.
ONLY THE IMMINENT PERIL FACING OUR UNIVERSE SHOULD BE OF ANY CONCERN.
AGREED?
YES...OF COURSE...
THEN LET US BE OFF!
APALLA...
LOOK OUT!

THE CREATORS! THEY WERE WAITING FOR US!
THEN STRIKE WITH ALL THE POWER AT YOUR COMMAND!
STRIKE IN THE NAME OF THE HEAVENS!
STRIKE IN THE NAME OF UNTAINTED LIGHT!

SO STRIKE THE MYSTIC DOES. OUT OF THE DARTING HANDS OF DR. STRANGE COME COLORFUL BEAMS OF PURE FORCE, WHICH TEAR INTO THE RANKS OF HIS FOES. LIKE AN UNSTOPPABLE DREADNOUGHT HE ADVANCES, TERRORIZING HIS ADVERSARIES EVEN MORE WITH HIS COLD AND MERCILESS MANNER, THAN WITH THE HAVOC HE CREATES IN THEIR NUMBERS.

WHILE, WITHIN HIMSELF YET ANOTHER FIERY CONFLICT RAGES. FOR HE IS TRAPPED BETWEEN HIS MORAL STAND NEVER TO TAKE LIFE, AND...
...A CRIMSON EMOTION WHICH CRIES FOR THE UTTER DESTRUCTION OF HIS ENEMIES.
A CONFLICT NOT BURDENING HIS STELLAR COMPANION.
EVEN SO, IT IS NOT APALLA WHO REALIZES SUDDENLY THAT...
APALLA AND I ARE DECIMATING THE CREATORS' DEFENSES WITH LITTLE EFFORT WHATSOEVER.
HOW COULD MEN OF SUCH LIMITED MYSTICAL SKILL CONTROL AGENTS LIKE XANDER AND VISIMAJORIS--? LET ALONE CREATE THE WHEEL OF CHANGE?
I'VE A FEELING THAT...
BUT BEFORE THE THOUGHT CAN BE COMPLETED...
DR. STRANGE!
OVER THERE!
IT IS THE WHEEL OF CHANGE! YOU MUST REACH IT!

IGNORING THE FINAL WORDS OF HIS BIZARRE ALLY, THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS LAUNCHES HIMSELF OVER THE HEADS OF THE CREATORS.
HIS FACE IS A KNOT OF TWISTED EMOTIONS, HIS MANNER GRIM AND DIRECT AS HIS LIPS SPIT OUT THE WORDS...
ONCE THERE, YOU MUST...
YES! I KNOW WHAT I MUST DO WHEN I REACH THE WHEEL...
...I MUST DESTROY IT!
NO!

THE WHEEL HAD REACHED THE CLIMAX OF ITS FUNCTION. FROM THIS POINT THE ALTERATION OF THE UNIVERSE, STARTED BY THE WHEEL, MIGHT WELL BE SELF SUSTAINING.

WE WERE TO REVERSE THE WHEEL'S PROGRESS, RETURNING THE STARS TO THE WAY THEY WERE. WITH THE WHEEL GONE, THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE!
MY HEAD...
WHAT HAVE I DONE?

NEXT: DR. STRANGE VS. DR. STRANGER YET!